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C O N F I D E N T I A L TBILISI 001248

SIPDIS

EUR/RPM JESSICA FISHER

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TAGS: OSCE PHUM PREL PGOV KDEM GG RU

SUBJECT: GEORGIA: RESPONSE TO OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION REQUEST
FOR INPUT

REF: A. STATE 59944
B. TBILISI 1150

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶11. (U) Summary and comment. In response to reftel A, post suggests raising human rights concerns in the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. With recent Russian vetoes of the OSCE and UN observer missions, outside access to vulnerable populations in both regions is nearly non-existent. Under the terms of the August 2008 ceasefire, Russia agreed to allow unhindered humanitarian access to both regions. Unfortunately, this agreement has not been upheld. The obstacles to access to these regions do not originate with the Georgians. To improve the humanitarian situation there all parties must adhere to the ceasefire agreements.

¶12. (C) There are conflicting reports on the extent of humanitarian-related problems in the Gali region of Abkhazia among UNOMIG officials, and with the closure of UNOMIG there will not be any independent reporting from within Abkhazia (see reftel B.) Issues affecting Georgian residents in Gali today include the lack of rehabilitation of infrastructure and impediments to crossing the administrative boundary. There are reports that teachers in Gali are being prohibited from teaching in the Georgian language, and also that students are not allowed to study Georgian history and geography from Georgian textbooks. Obtaining travel documents is a difficult process for Georgian residents.

¶13. (U) The lack of access to South Ossetia by any international organizations except for the Red Cross continues to blind the international community to the status of the population's welfare. There are reports of gang activity, banditry, and kidnappings, but due to the lack of access to the regions these accusations can not be investigated. Access to this area must be facilitated in order to prevent further humanitarian disaster.

TEFFT